Terry E. Branstad Governor

Kim Reynolds Lt. Governor Charles M. Palmer Director

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What happened?

A: On December 4, 2011 a fire destroyed a significant portion of the county-owned lowa Department of Human Services building in Warren County. Firefighters placed water damaged and partially burned documents into a large container. Due to the extent of the damage the building was condemned. Salvage and recovery of damaged records and files proceeded immediately and all confidential files, including the container filled with partially damaged records, were moved to another secure facility owned by Warren County.

On March 14, 2012 the Department of Human Services received a call from a neighbor stating that debris from the building had blown into her yard and may contain confidential information. Upon investigation it was confirmed that the material originated from the Warren County Human Services building. On the morning of March 15th at 6:00 a.m. a thorough sweep of the adjoining yards and fields was completed to recover as many documents as possible.

An investigation revealed that on or about the week of February 6, 2012 a Warren County maintenance worker mistakenly moved the large container of documents from this secured location back to the fire damaged building. In order to use the container on other clean-up work, the maintenance worker discarded the documents, along with other maintenance debris, onto the floor of the fire damaged building.

Q: Why was there a delay between the incident and notifying me that this happened?

A: DHS began an investigation on March 15, 2012, which included the following:

- A physical search for documents in areas surrounding the building, and within the fire damaged building
- Interviews to discover how the container (with the fire-damaged documents) was moved from the secured location
- A complete review of each document was conducted and documented

Q: I received a letter that said my personal information may have been exposed. What does that mean?

A: It means that we cannot be certain that we recovered all of the documents that were improperly dumped at the unsecured site of the fire. The documents included portions of files that had one or more of the following types of information:

- 1. Name
- 2. Mailing address
- 3. Telephone number
- 4. Date of Birth
- 5. Social Security Number

None of the documents included credit card or bank information. Due to the circumstances of the exposure, the possibility that your information has been accessed or misused is minimal. Per Iowa Code 715C, DHS must notify individuals when their personal information has been unsecured or exposed.

Q: How many people are impacted by this incident?

A: It is unlikely that any information was used improperly but we cannot be certain that we recovered all of the exposed documents. Thus we are sending letters to approximately 3,000 people who had open or recently-closed cases in the Warren County office.

Q: What can I do to protect myself from identity theft?

A: If your personal information was possibly exposed as a result of this incident, you will receive a letter with instructions on how to receive one year of free credit monitoring services from Experian, a global leader in the credit monitoring field. This service includes daily credit monitoring, alerts of key changes to credit files and identity theft insurance. We strongly encourage you to activate this free service.

Q: Should I close my credit card or other accounts?

A: No account number information was contained within the exposed documents.

Q: What are DHS and Warren County doing to address this problem?

A: DHS is:

- Sending a notification letter to each person potentially affected by this incident
- Offering free credit monitoring for all individuals receiving a notification letter
- Activating a hotline. Individuals may call 800-447-1985 for more information about the data breach.

Iowa Concern Hotline: 1-800-447-1985